

Fully Qualified, Forcing or Not Forcing

Opener's Jump Shift, Episode 4

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This is the continuation of a series of articles on forcing bids. In modern bidding one must know which bids, - made either by you or your partner, as a response or a rebid, - are forcing or can be passed. This is the foundation of good bidding.

PREREQUISITES

Please refer to my first article in this series, episode 1, for a consideration of bids that fully qualify the opener's hand. Refer to episode 2 for an in-depth discussion of the essential elements that indicate a Reverse bid by opener. Refer to Episode 3 for a simple and efficient method for responding to the Reverse. Since this is a series, each episode builds on the concepts and theory presented in previous articles. I may even use terms presented in those episodes.

OPENER'S JUMP SHIFT

Consider the following hand: Most would agree with an opening bid of 1♦.

♠ x
♥ Qx
♦ AKQJxx
♣ AQxx

If responder bids 1♠, opener has an opportunity to jump shift by bidding 3♣. This hand holds an unbalanced 18 HCP and a 6-4 shape in the minors. If you review Episode 3, you see that a reverse bid is impossible since Diamonds are ranked higher than Clubs. Why then do newer players struggle with the entire process of the opener's jump shift?

Before we get into the mechanics of this important bid, would you jump shift with the following hand? (Most would agree with an opening bid of 1♦.)

♠ x
♥ x
♦ AKQJxxx
♣ AQxx

If responder bids 1♠, I have a few questions:

- Would you jump to 3♣ if you were the opener?
- How many HCP does opener promise if they make a jump shift?
- What shape is expected in opener's hand if they jump shift?
- Is the jump shift forcing?
- If it is forcing, is it for one round or to game?

- How many Diamonds are suggested if opener makes a jump shift?
- How many Clubs could opener have?

In the first example above, opener has 18 HCP, in the second example opener has only 16 HCP. Prisoners of point count will jump to 3♦ in the second example which holds only 16 HCP. The likelihood of missing a game is high. The second hand has an amazing trick taking ability.

As a foundation of your bidding theory, the following postulate is reasonable:

What you lack in HCP you compensate for in shape, or

With extreme shape, fewer HCP are needed to make an opener's jump shift.

A second thing to consider is the **quality** of the suit. In the above examples, the Diamond suit is extraordinary. Without an excellent source of tricks you might reconsider your decision to jump shift.

Let's answer the questions, explore some examples and get to a bottom line.

I repeat the hand for your convenience.

Most would agree with an opening bid of 1♦.

♠ x
♥ x
♦ AKQJxxx
♣ AQxx

If responder bids 1♠, I had a few questions and answers:

- Would you jump to 3♣ if you were the opener?
Absolutely
- How many HCP does opener promise if they make a jump shift?
17/18-21 or extreme distribution with high quality suit(s).
- What shape is expected in opener's hand if they jump shift?
Unbalanced
- Is the jump shift forcing?
Absolutely, at least for 1 round or to game by partnership agreement
- If it is forcing, is it for one round or to game?
Most people who require the values of 19+ HCP or evaluation points in order to jump shift, play the jump shift as forcing to game
- How many Diamonds are suggested if opener makes a jump shift?
5+
- How many Clubs could opener have?
As few as 3 especially with a shape of 1♠ 3♥ 6♦ 3♣

This discussion should highlight the paramount importance of partnership agreement. The questions I asked you above form the basis for your agreement regarding the opener's jump shift. As an aside, there is no such thing as an opener's jump shift that shows a weak hand.

EXAMPLES:

The Bidding			
Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
♠ x	AQJx	1♦	1♠

♥ Jx	xx	3♣	5♦
♦ AKJxxx	xxxx	Pass	Pass
♣ AKQx	xxx		

Opener avoided bidding 2NT, with an extraordinary Diamond fit and no interest in slam, responder should bid game in Diamonds.

The Bidding

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
♠ x	QJx	1♦	1NT
♥ Ax	xxx	3♣	3NT
♦ AKJxxx	xxx	4♣ (Gerber)	4♦ (Zero Aces)
♣ AKxx	QJxx	4NT (To play)	

In this example, opener has a great hand, 19 HCP and shape. Responder denies a 4 card major and bids 1NT which could be a minimum of 6 HPC to a maximum of 10 HCP depending on how you play it. Opener jump shifts to 3 Clubs and responder bids game in NT indicating a stopper in one or both majors and no interest in slam. Opener still thinks that slam may be possible and asks for Aces. Responder shows none. Opener settles for 4NT.

The Bidding

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
♠ AKJxx	x	1♠	1NT
♥ xx	AQxx	♣	4NT
♦ A	Kxxx	5♣ (1 or 4)	6NT
♣ AKxxx	Jxxx		

Opener begins with 1 Spade and responder makes a 1NT response. Regardless of how you play that, opener jump shifts to 3♣. Responder has a great hand opposite a jump shift and immediately asks for controls. Opener must answer with Club controls as Clubs was the last bid suit. Opener shows 1 or 4 and responder settles for 6 NT. It's a skinny slam but it might make.

The Bidding

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
♠ AQ	Kxxx	1♥	1♠
♥ AKxxxx	Jx	3♣	3♥
♦ xx	xxxx	4♥	
♣ AKx	Qxx		

After an opening bid of 1♥, responder bid 1♠ and opener jump shifted into Clubs. Sometimes one must jump shift into a 3 card suit. Since it is forcing, responder must bid again. Supporting Hearts with honor dub and a minimum hand seems reasonable having no Diamond stopper. Opener bids game.

WHAT I LEARN AS I WATCH INTERMEDIATE/NOVICE PLAYERS

I direct 5 I/N games and 2 Open games on BBO. This has given me an opportunity to watch and identify bad bidding and play. I am grateful for this chance to discover the weaknesses of newer players and perhaps help them to grow. Bridge, like any other discipline, becomes a tragedy when a player reaches a point where they think they have nothing left to learn.

The most egregious error that I see is jump shifting/jumping with the wrong hand.

This example is a BBO hand many readers most likely played.

The Bidding

Opener	Responder	Opener	Responder
♠ x	xxxx	1♦	1♠
♥ AQxx	Jxx	<u>2NT?</u>	3NT
♦ AJxx	xx		
♣ AJxx	KQxx		

Opener having 16 HCP could not open 1NT with a singleton rag in Spades. However, opener chose to jump to 2NT over 1♠ and the results were disastrous. 2NT promises 18-19. At another table, Opener reversed their second bid and bid 2♥. Again, a disaster as the reverse shows longer Diamonds. At another table, Opener jump shifted their second bid and bid 3♣. Since that is forcing, Responder bid 5♣ for down 1. Opener should rebid 2♣.

I can categorize these mistakes easily:

- Jumping to 2NT with the wrong values and shape
- Jump Shifting with the wrong shape and values
- Reversing with the wrong shape and values
- 16 HCP with a 4,4,4,1 shape is just not worthy of a jump bid.

It should be noted that sometimes bad bidding turns out well for you. Especially when your opponents are novices. Play occasionally in an open field as a better gauge of your progress.

Next time! Responder's reverse and responder's jump shift.

STAY TUNED!